



THE MOKI MESSENGER

May-June 2026

San Juan Basin Archaeological Society

sjbas.org

SJBAS Monthly Meeting: May 13

SJBAS Meeting – After a brief business meeting, we will have a presentation on “Continental-scale faunal exchange event with Eurasia which happened between 20-25 million years ago that produced the African fauna we know today” presented by John Kappelman, Ph.D.

A reception starts things off at 6:30 p.m. in the Center of Southwest Studies foyer and the presentation begins at 7 PM in the Lyceum.



■ Europe/Northern Asia ■ Africa ■ India/Arabia ■ Ocean ■ Tethys Sea

Key Features of This Period:

Tethys Sea: The ancient ocean between Africa and Eurasia was closing as Africa moved northward, eventually forming the Mediterranean Sea.

India-Asia Collision: India had already collided with Asia about 25-30 million years prior, and the Himalayas were actively rising.

Arabian Peninsula: Still connected to Africa; the Red Sea rift had not yet fully opened.

Africa's Position: Located further south than today, gradually moving northward toward Europe.

Madagascar: Already separated from Africa but positioned slightly differently than its modern location.

President's Message

Dear Fellow Members:

Welcome to another issue of the *Moki Messenger*—and what promises to be one of our most active seasons yet.

Best Seasons to Visit the Desert Sites

Spring and Fall are the seasons made for exploring the Ancient Puebloan sites of the Four Corners—comfortable hiking, stunning light for photography, and none of the punishing summer heat. If you haven't yet experienced Hovenweep, Lowry, or Chaco in spring or autumn, make it a priority this year.

2026 Field Trips and Upcoming Events

We have a full lineup for 2026—canyon tours, pueblo visits, tribal cultural days, and more. Check the calendar in this issue and at sjbas.org for the latest info as events details may change and we may add events. And bring a friend!

Fort Lewis College Field Survey—"Badger House"

We're collaborating with Professor Mario Borrero of Fort Lewis College and long-time member Tom Darnell on a formal field study near the Painted Hand Site at Hovenweep Nat'l Monument. The site—newly named "Badger House"—sits on Tom's property, and the May fieldwork will include aerial drone survey led by Prof. Borrero—a licensed drone pilot. Seasoned archaeologists and enthusiastic amateurs alike are welcome. Check your SJBAS e-blasts from Byron for more details or sjbas.org for updates.

Volunteer at the Durango Farmers' Market!

SJBAS will have a booth at the Saturday Farmers' Market on Main Street in Downtown Durango on select Saturdays this season. Come share your love of archaeology with neighbors, meet new faces, and maybe recruit a few new members—it only takes a few hours on a Saturday morning. Contact Joel or Tammie Barger for dates and details.

Summer Picnic—June 10 at the Junction Creek Group Site

Our annual Summer Picnic is set for June 10th. Reserve your spot in advance by contacting Tammie or Joel Barger. We hope to see a big turnout!

Three-Year Master Plan—Your Input Wanted

The Board is working on a three-year master plan for SJBAS, and we want your voice in it. Reach out to me directly for a draft copy and to share your thoughts.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable community—boots on and eyes open.

Warmly,

Thomas Polich
President, San Juan Basin Archaeological Society

SJBAS Members Take Guided Tour of Mesa Verde Research Collections

On January 21, 2026, ten members of SJBAS, (Tish, Elena, Chris, Claudia, Bob, Tom, Hunter, Lorraine and Lorie) were treated to a first-rate tour of the



artifact collections at Mesa Verde National Park. Our tour was led by Gwen Gallenstein, Museum Curator and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) officer for the Park.



The Visitors Center, which officially opened in 2012 houses all of the collections. Previous to this time they were stored in a tin shed surrounded by trees and vegetation. The threat of wildfires destroying the collections was one big consideration for the development of the current Visitors Center.

At one time in our country's history all recovered native artifacts were to be sent to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D. C. Facilities wanting to house their own collections had to get approval from the Smithsonian. Although Mesa Verde primarily houses artifacts originating from the Park, it also maintains several donated collections, including the Rockefeller and Mary Colter assemblages—many of which lack documented provenience (that is, precise information about where they were originally recovered).

Their collections include not only Native American objects but Geology, Insects, Plants, Paleontology and a fine art collection. Although we all questioned the definition of “fine art” after viewing the pieces.

The first artifact we examined was a large olla jar that had originally been used for cooking and later repurposed as a water vessel.



What made it particularly distinctive was the cordage harness wrapped around the jar and the woven ring that served as a supportive base.



It came from Step House and Gwen placed the age in the late 1100's to the early 1200's. Keep in mind people were in the Mesa Verde area as early as 7-9,000 years ago. We also saw pre-contact jewelry and two very special dog hair sashes. (Some of you may recall the lecture last September by Laurie Webster on Ancestral Puebloan People raising dogs

for their white hair).

Other artifact highlights included, precontact jewelry dating from the 1100 to the 1200's, a coiled basket from Long House thought to be from the 1100's to 1256, turkey feather socks and footwear, a piece of woven cotton from 780 C.E. found in the Park, and a variety of woven baskets and clay bowls, jars and other figurines.

By popular demand the tour was repeated in late March. Participants on the deja tour were Betsy, Phil, Russ, Marlene, Michelle, Mark, Pam, Quent, Jim and Rita. *—submitted by Lorie Hansen*

PAAC Lithic Analysis Workshop – April 4, 2026

The PAAC Lithic Analysis Workshop, held on April 4, 2026, at the Center for Southwest Studies, was led by Dr. Sarah Allaun, Assistant State Archaeologist. The workshop included 15 participants, five of whom were members of the Hisatsinom Archaeological Society from Cortez.





The session began with an overview of how lithic analysis can provide valuable insights into the behaviors and practices of the people who produced stone tools. This was followed by a review of the various raw materials used in tool and projectile manufacture, accompanied by representative examples.



Participants were then introduced to the fundamentals of fracture mechanics, including the identifying characteristics of flakes, cores, and debitage. After a lunch break, Dr. Allaun discussed the methods archaeologists use to identify, analyze, and document lithic artifacts.

The workshop concluded with a hands-on exercise in which participants were given a collection of lithic materials to examine and document using the techniques presented.

--Submitted by Betsy Moore

SJBAS Coming Attractions

SJBAS Annual Picnic at Junction Creek Group Campground Pavillion. Contact Tammie or Joel Barger at tab2105@comcast.net or joel.barger@comcast.net to make your reservation.

Pecos Conference near Mancos – August 6-9, camping or take day trips. The site is only an hour from Durango. Each August, archaeologists gather under open skies, and a big tent, somewhere in the southwestern United States or northwestern Mexico. The Conference is open to all and is a great opportunity to hear from and meet a variety of professional archaeologists informally. Believe me, they love to talk about their work. On Saturday evening, stay for the dinner and dance. Sign up for one of the field trips led participating scholars. There will be vendors for meals and refreshments or pack a lunch. The conference website has limited info at this time. Here it is pecosconference.org. Contact Rusty Chamberlain for more info chambrke@aol.com. Difficulty: Easy

SJBAS to Conduct Community Outreach with an Informational Table at the Main Street Durango Farmers Market

SJBAS will host an informational table at several upcoming *Main Street* Durango Farmers Markets. The table will be staffed by members on the Saturdays of May 9, June 13 and October 8. This SJBAS outreach program is being organized by Tammie and Joel Barger. We welcome and need membership participation in staffing the table. Contact Tammie tab2105@comcast.net at to help out.



Field Trip Report: Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum Tour, March 24

On March 24, 2026, thirteen members of the San Juan Basin Archaeological Society gathered for a combined social and educational outing to the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum in Ignacio, Colorado.



The event started at the Rolling Thunder Grill for lunch followed by a walk to the Cultural Center and Museum. The tour was led by Raelynn Frauenhoff, Museum Education and Outreach Coordinator. Raelynn began the tour by explaining the history and architecture of Cultural Center itself.



Inside of the main exhibit hall the tour followed a chronological path beginning with the Ute Creation story. The tour continued with topics that included; the efforts today to create a written Ute language, the history of



shelters from brush structures to tipis, the Spaniards and the acquisition of horses, treaties from 1849 to present, boarding schools and the federal policies that sought to eradicate their culture. The tour concluded with the story of returning WWII veterans assisting to draft the Rehabilitation Plan to establish an economic plan for the social welfare of the tribal membership.

Please note that a more detailed copy of this trip report (along with most field trip reports of the last ten years) can be found on the sjbas.org website under the Field Trip Archives [here](#). --
Submitted by Joel and Tammie Barger

Upcoming SJBAS Events for 2026

**[Contact trip organizers for details.
 See sjbas.org for the latest version of the full-year calendar.
 Dates and event descriptions may change]**

May 9	Durango Farmer’s Market on Main Street , SJBAS informational table, 8 AM – 1 PM. Contact Tammie at tab2105@comcast.net to sign up to help staff the table.
May 13	SJBAS Meeting — “Continental-scale faunal exchange event with Eurasia that produced the African fauna we know today.” This talk is by Dr. John Kappelman, emeritus professor at the University of Texas, Austin. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
June 10	SJBAS Annual Picnic , Junction Creek Group Pavillion. Contact Tammie or Joel Barger at tab2105@comcast.net or joel.barger@comcast.net to make your reservation.
June 13	Goodman Point Day Trip , Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .

June 13	Durango Farmer’s Market on Main Street , SJBAS informational table, 8 AM – 1 PM. To help staff the table contact Tammie Barger at tab2105@comcast.net .
June 23-25	Ohkay Owingeh Feast Day plus Rancho de las Golondrinas, Poushe Ohwingeh and Puye Cliffs , Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .
July 8	SJBAS Meeting — “Overall history of the people who created Chaco: Where they came from, their ascendance into what has been called <i>The Chaco Phenomenon</i> , the subsequent decline, and where they have gone.” A presentation by former NPS Ranger GB Cornucopia. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
July 11	Durango Farmer’s Market on Main Street , SJBAS informational table, 8 AM – 1 PM. To help staff the table contact Tammie Barger at tab2105@comcast.net .
August 6-9	Pecos Conference , Mancos. Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com . SJBAS will also staff an informational table at this conference on August 8.
August 8	Durango Farmer’s Market on Main Street , SJBAS informational table, 8 AM – 1 PM. Contact Tammie at tab2105@comcast.net to sign up to help staff the table.
August 12	SJBAS Meeting — “Archaeology of Andean South America,” a presentation by James Davenport, University of Missouri Anthropology Department. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
September 4-7	Nine Mile Canyon Tour , A 3-day, self-guided driving trip to Nine Mile Canyon, Utah,—often called the “World’s Longest Art Gallery”—home to one of the densest concentrations of Fremont and Ute rock art in the Southwest. The trip would involve roadside stops with short walks only—no strenuous hiking—and overnight lodging in or near Helper or Price, Utah (optional rustic in-canyon lodging) is being explored. The remote setting, with limited services and cell coverage, offers a quiet, accessible, and educational experience. Members will be assigned homework to gather information and present during their assigned site visit. Difficulty Rating: Easy. Contact Thomas Polich at thomas.polich@gmail.com
September 9	SJBAS Meeting —“The Organization of Labor at Betatakin and Keet Seel,” a presentation by Katie Williams, Crow Canyon. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
September TBA	Aztec Ruins National Monument Cultural Day , Contact Susan Hicks at sjbashicks@gmail.com . SJBAS may also host an informational table at this event.
October 14	SJBAS Meeting — “Late Middle Archaic and Early Agricultural Period in Southern Arizona: Materials from McEuen Cave,” presented by Joseph Birkmann, University of New Mexico. This cave in Northeast Arizona has produced some of the oldest maize and squash in the region. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.

October 14-18	Guided Tour of Paquimé, Chihuahua, Mexico. Cost is about \$1,350. Contact trip organizer Hunter McCleary at hunter.mccleary@gmail.com for more information.
November 11	SJBAS Meeting—Speaker TBA. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.

Educational Opportunities on Southwest Archaeology

As Compiled by Betsy Moore, SJBAS PAAC Coordinator
[If not offered nearby they can be seen on Zoom]

May 13- August 5	The Mogollon Culture of the US Southwest , a 14-week course offered on Zoom by Old Pueblo Archaeology Center. You may peruse their flyer here or call them at 520-798-1201.
May 21	“Exposing Frauds, Busting Myths, and Solving Mysteries in American Southwest Archaeology,” Kenneth Freder, Old Pueblo Archaeology zoom presentation, 7 PM PST. More information is here .
June 2	Three Step Hamlet: Subsistence and Community in the Margins of the Central Mesa Verde , Hisatsinom Chapter, Colorado Archaeological Society, Cortez, 7 PM. United Methodist Church.
June 9–July 7	Overview of Hohokam Pottery Wares and Types: A five-session online class offered by Old Pueblo Archaeology Center. Runs on consecutive Tuesdays starting on June 9. You may peruse the brochure here . Or call them at
June 18	American Paleolithic and Evidence from the Gault Archaeological Site , sponsored by Old Pueblo Archaeology, 7 PM
June 18	“Reconciliation at Fort Lewis College,” Matthew Schaeffer, 4 PM. You may register or learn more about this Crow Canyon-sponsored program here . It will be zoomed.

SJBAS Elected Officers and Board Members

President	Thomas Polich
Vice President	OPEN
Secretary	Susan Hicks
Treasurer	Mary Moorehead
Communications chair	Byron Kellogg

Membership chair	Elena Piazzisi
Field Trip Program coordinator	Rusty Chamberlain
Education/PAAC representative	Betsy Moore
<i>Moki Messenger</i> editor	Hunter McCleary
Programming chair	Janice Sheftel
Publicity chair	Rusty Chamberlain
Social chair	Tammie and Joel Barger
Webmaster	Lyle Hancock

SJBAS Membership renewals are due by January 31st each year. Individual dues drop to \$15 after June 30. To renew your membership, please complete the SJBAS Annual Membership Form, make your check for \$25 (\$50 family, \$10 student) payable to “SJBAS” and mail with the printed Annual Membership Form only to: SJBAS, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 3153, Durango, CO 81302.

If you would like to join SJBAS or need to renew a lapsed membership, just print and complete the Annual Membership Form; sign the membership form, Liability Waiver and Proper Etiquette forms; write a check payable to “SJBAS” for the appropriate amount; and mail the Annual Membership Form, the signed liability form and your check to our Society Treasurer. Please keep your signed *Proper Etiquette forms* for your records.